



Matthew 1:22-23

22 All this took place to fulfill what the Lord had said through the prophet: 23 “The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel” (which means “God with us”).

Let's set the scene from yesterday. Mary's turned up on Joseph's door step four months pregnant. And we saw that Joseph's on the verge of divorcing Mary, but God supernaturally intervenes, sending an angel to him in a

dream. 'Stay with Mary, despite the shame this is going to bring on you and your family, stay with her because God has done an amazing thing. The Holy Spirit himself has conceived her child.' God's Spirit who came upon prophets and priests and kings in the Old Testament has for the first and only time in the history of the world created a child in Mary who was a virgin. You're to call him Jesus, 'God saves,' because he is going to save his people from their sins.

Yesterday we saw that we have to take Jesus on his own terms: he didn't come to earth to save the Jews from Roman occupation, as many people back then liked to think, and he didn't come to earth to raise the ethical standards of the world through great moral teaching, as many people today like to think; he came to save the world from its sins.

And today, the story takes a little pause, so the narrator, Matthew, can explain what's just happened. Matthew wants to make sure that we understand the significance of what has just come to pass – and the implications.

Three things stand out from yesterday's passage that Matthew wants to underline for us. If you have your bibles there, why not cast your eye back over verses 20 and 21. Firstly, who names a child? A child's parents, right? Yes, and God names Jesus through his angel, his messenger. Secondly, did you notice that Jesus came to save 'his people from their sins' in verse 21, you'd expect it to say God's people, but it says 'his people'? That's because God and Jesus are one, God's people are his people, because Jesus is God. And thirdly, and most explicitly we read that Jesus was 'conceived by the Holy Spirit' – what does this

mean? What do these three points mean? They mean that the son of God is about to be born, God the Father has used God the Spirit to create in Mary, God the Son. It's the Christian teaching of the Trinity right here in action. One God, three persons, Father, Son & Spirit in action right here at this momentous moment in history. That strange break in the genealogy, father of, father of, father of and then... What? This whole list is to emphasise that Joseph didn't father Jesus? What could possibly be going on here? Exactly what it seems – Joseph didn't father Jesus because God did, God the Father sent God the Holy Spirit so that Mary would give birth to God the Son.

And so here in verses 22 and 23 Matthew spells out for us what this means when he says 'and they will call him Immanuel (which means "God with us.") In Jesus, God is with

us. Jesus, means 'God saves', Jesus will be called Immanuel 'God is with us' – God saves and he is with us, that's what's going on here.

And this name Immanuel has great historical significance as Matthew points out by quoting words from more than 700 years before the birth of Jesus, spoken by one of the greatest prophets in the Old Testament, the prophet Isaiah, who himself was filled with the Spirit of God, when he foretold this very event with these words,

'The virgin will conceive and give birth to a son, and they will call him Immanuel'

And so Matthew is saying, just in case you've missed the full significance of what is going on here, let me make it plain – in Jesus, God is with us, God has come and made his dwelling place amongst men, God has come to save his

people from their sins in the person of Jesus.

The bible uses many great names to describe Jesus. It's full of them. He is the First and the Last, the Beginning and the End, the Alpha and the Omega, the Ancient of Days. He is the King of Kings and the Lord of Lords. He is the Anointed One, the Messiah. He is our Prophet, Priest and King. He's the Good Shepherd, and the Lamb Who Was Slain. He is the Word. He is the Way and the Truth and the Life. He is the Resurrection and the Life. He is our Rock, and our Redeemer, the Head over all things.

But above all, he is 'Immanuel' 'God with us' and he came from heaven to earth to save us from our sins. That's how Matthew begins and ends his gospel, he begins by announcing that 'God is with us' in the person of Jesus and he ends, the very last words of his gos-

pel, the very last verse, with these words from the lips of Jesus, these words of very great comfort, in Matthew 28:20 'And surely I am with you always, to the very end of the age.'

What incredible words of comfort are these.

If Jesus is with you, if he lives in your heart through his Holy Spirit, if you've been adopted into his family through faith in his work on the cross, then he promises to be with you to the very end of the age. And then you'll live forever with him in heaven. God is with us, and so there's nothing to fear. No matter what today holds, nothing to fear, but much to praise God for, much to be thankful for. So why not praise God right now? Why not thank him right now? If God is for you, who can be against you? Don't just file this truth away now as you get about your day, hold onto it tight-

ly, let it fill you with a confidence and joy and perspective that makes this day a great day.

Thanks so much for reading, and I'm praying that these two precious verses of Scripture will make the difference for you today.